

PODIUM

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

LAURA COSTER

Lessons in Bocce Ball

Greetings IL-ACDA members! I hope you had time to relax over the summer and you are encouraged about this academic year. I'm writing to you in mid-August and it is a beautiful, sunny Sunday. I just played a few rounds of Bocce ball with my family in our backyard.

This simple yard game is new to me. Points are scored by getting your ball closest to the pallina ball. I am an average athlete at best, especially in a sport that requires throwing a round sphere accurately. My family knows this about me and loves me unconditionally despite my lack of skill. To everyone's surprise, I easily won each round we played. The ground appears to be rather flat in our yard, yet it is actually not level which causes the ball to curve unexpectedly. Somehow, it was difficult for others and I just kept throwing the balls successfully.

I felt so good after we played. There was no prize and no real benefit to winning, yet it felt good to feel successful in a game that is new to me. I thought about it later, and realized this is how some of our singers feel when they join choir for the first time.

In this season of rebuilding our choral programs, how can we give our newest singers a positive feeling of accomplishment after our rehearsals? After all, in choir everybody can win, right?

Let this sink in for a minute...If the kid you talked into trying choir feels successful, he/she/they will want to come back for more. I can't tell you how many times I pulled a student out of a study hall to try choir for the day. Sometimes it worked magically and sometimes they just weren't interested. Once in a while, that study hall tenor was in my top ensemble the following year.

What makes it go well for a new singer? The feeling of personal success! Encourage your newest singers by letting them know they did a good job. Simple things work best. Ask your leaders to reach out to the newer students can help them connect and enjoy the class. Add a few really fun warm-ups that are both musical and physical. Make the start of rehearsal fun and easy to join. Start with a familiar melody so they can feel immediate success. Let them know that it is okay to be a new singer. Let them know they are needed and that you enjoy them.

This year, there are new growth opportunities for both you and your students to grow personally and musically. Enjoy thinking about what is possible this year. We are here for you to connect, create, reflect, and refresh.

See the list of events we are planning for you and your singers with COVID protocols in place. Your safety is our priority.

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Upcoming Events:

2021 Fall Conference - (see pg. 12-13)

**Many Voices at DePaul University,
Friday-Saturday, October 15-16**
Lincoln Park Campus
804 W. Belden Ave, Chicago 60614

Headliners

David Brunner and Diana Saez
Safety precautions will be in place for all participants.

Join Voices-High School Honor Choir for Chicago Public School students.

Diana Saez, director

Children's Honor Choir

Register your 4th - 6th grade singers now!
Ryan Henry, director
Limited to 50 singers to allow for social distancing. Deadline is September 15th.

Teacher Registration: <https://forms.gle/6NcprZnt4WUurY9CA>

Student Application: <https://forms.gle/J2emZ29mSaaj1PvM6>

Performance Choirs: Kenwood Academy Choir, DePaul University Concert Choir, U of IL-Champaign Chamber Singers, Kababayan Collective, Augustana Choir, Lincoln Land Community Choir, Naperville Men's Chorus, and the Windy City Performing Arts.

Interest Sessions and Reading Sessions for all levels!

Harold Decker Award Winner, Eric Johnson, will be honored.

2021 Composition Winner will be recognized.

Early registration ends on September 30

Registration includes all sessions, materials, and music.

To register for the IL-ACDA Fall Conference you must be an active member of ACDA. Please have your membership number ready when registering. If you are not yet a member of ACDA or your membership has expired, please join/renew your membership at <https://acda.org/membership-central/> first to obtain your membership number.

As a special incentive, **registration is FREE FOR CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS!** (ACDA membership is not

required, but CPS ID must be shown at registration.)

Click here to register for the Fall Convention - <https://www.il-acda.org/fallconference/>

2021 Honor Show Choir Festival

**Naperville North HS,
Friday-Saturday, October 15-16**

Check our website for audition information for your individual students
www.il-acda.org

Contact Nick Janssen, Show Choir, at njanssen@naperville203.org if you have questions. CDC protocols will be in place.

2022 Midwest Regional Conference

Chicago, February 16-19, 2022

Click here for details about the honor choirs and registration: <https://midwesternacda.org/>

2022 ReTreat- Summer Conference

Central IL TBD, June 22-23 2022

Headliners are Jerry Blackstone and Arreon Harley-Emerson
More details will be posted on our website during the next several months.

Other events this year are currently being planned for the spring of 2022. Check our website for updates.

Sing and Share Festival

-Bring your choir!

The District 2 Treble Festival is on 2/10/2022

A Chicago area festival is being planned for the late winter. The format will be adjusted slightly to allow for social distancing. Details will be shared later in November.

<https://www.il-acda.org/il-acda-treble-choir-festival/>

T/B Choir Festival-Bring your TB singers for this group event at Western IL University in the early spring! Date - TBA

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What's in Your Vocal Model?

Establishing a Voice Quality Ideal in the Choral Rehearsal

Brian Winnie

College/University Choirs

Director of Choral Activities
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All choral repertoire is essentially a composer's guide to their intentions portrayed through notation. The notation serves as a written recording of sound, but even with advances in musical notation over generations, it cannot indicate everything to performers. Perhaps most importantly, repertoire often lacks the composer's voice quality ideal. Although, composers do occasionally use words such as "floaty" and "extremely light and delicate with a very smooth effect" to describe voice quality. Regarding historic repertoire, conductor-teachers can gain insight from the vast array of musicological research on performance and style practices. But this is not the same as hearing a live performance. It's still difficult to imagine how a Gregorian chant would have sounded to the composers/arranger in the tenth century versus what is heard from vocalists and ensembles today. Even further, did Monteverdi ever hear his pieces performed in the way he intended or heard in his mind? Will we ever really know a composer's sound ideal and how it relates to their context and vocal production standards at that time?

Ensemble conductor-teachers have two challenging tasks. The first, to determine the authentic, sustainable voice quality to use for a particular style of repertoire. Since the notation cannot give all the answers, teachers can only make their best-educated guesses from research or active communication and exploration with a living composer. Conductor-teachers can also pull from previous experiences and live or recorded performances (thanks to YouTube) of the commissioned ensemble or exemplary ensembles for guidance. Even recordings, however, are not altogether as helpful due to the many technological adjustments to voice quality created through the editing process with programs like auto-tune and Melodyne. This leads to the second task, to teach the desired

voice quality and its differences from other voice qualities.

Let's harken back for a moment to the oral transmission of music before the invention of recorded notation. Passing music down orally not only taught the songs but taught the sound ideal as well. This type of rote learning is a traditional part of many early elementary music pedagogies and varied teaching methodologies like Dalcroze and Kodály. And these are not age dependent. Conductor-teachers can use vocal modeling and engage in imitation techniques to help students of all ages increase their level of music-making and self-efficacy. Teachers, however, should be versed in these sound ideals and be able to model and teach them healthfully and sustainably to their ensembles. More importantly, conductor-teachers must use modeling as a goal toward student independence and understanding. To clarify, I am not suggesting that sight-reading skills are unimportant. I am suggesting, however, that conductors teach sound *before sight and then sound connected with sight*.

Modeling and imitation are both integral components of human learning. We all imitate gestures, behavior, and learn language through the imitation of sounds. Specific to music teaching, modeling is defined as a presentation that may occur through a live or recorded medium that may later be imitated by the observer (Madsen, Greer, & Madsen 1975). Research suggests that vocal modeling has a more significant effect than speech-directed modeling on individual and group music achievement and student attitudes in the choral rehearsal (Mann 2008). Dickey (1992) found that modeling was found to be a more effective strategy than verbal description for teaching musical performance throughout a wide range distribution (i.e., elementary through graduate level). The mere act of modeling a behavior or strategy, however, does not imply the observer has learned the target goal and not every model is helpful. According to Bandura's Social Learning Theory, four

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mediational processes occur before a student can imitate and learn from a model: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation.

Attention

As conductor-teachers model a voice quality, they should call attention to one element of the model rather than the overall quality. For example, teachers can have students listen for the nasality or listen for the low or mid velum (soft palate). It is important to eventually label the anatomy as shown in the example instead of using only metaphors. Metaphors like bright versus dark or twangy versus hollow can have many meanings and cause confusion. This confusion can make it difficult for students to know how to reproduce the voice quality accurately. Eventually, physiological descriptions can replace metaphors, i.e., larynx height, velum height (soft palate), pharyngeal width, or tongue position. This is especially valuable for novice singers or those new to a specific voice quality who could benefit from an internal focus of attention (Helding 2020, 143). Conductor-teachers should, however, know how to model these adjustments and how they sound when they do so. Teachers can then focus on additional elements during subsequent rehearsals.

Retention

Teachers can help students improve their practice by a) focusing on the smallest amount of material that will have the most meaning for them and b) learning episodes short, i.e., 20-minute teaching blocks with 18 minutes of teaching time and 2 minutes of downtime (Sousa 2017, 102-111). In his book *How the Brain Learns* (2017), David Sousa also suggests that teachers should place new information they want students to retain in the first part of the class period or teaching episode. Students “remember best that which comes first, second best that which comes last, and least that which comes just past the middle” (p. 101). This means it’s also crucial that the information presented is accurate. Otherwise, students are more likely to recall the inaccurate information, even if correct later.

Providing specific, goal-oriented teacher feedback after a task can also help guide students to perceive their production more accurately and aid in retention. However,

conductor-teachers should ask students to process what occurred and generate self-feedback as well. This bit of extra time can be very useful. It’s important to note that a student’s perception of their voice imitating a vocal model is influenced by hearing themselves partially through bone conduction. Having students record themselves can offer a more complete aural perspective of their production. Apps or programs with spectrograms are great audio/visual aids. Teachers can take time to discuss the recordings as a class, in small groups/pairs with teacher-guided practice, or have students reflect individually.

Learning is rarely linear, and students may find that new knowledge is cognitively dissonant with their prior experiences. Teachers should therefore introduce new ideas without suggesting that previous learning was simply “wrong.” Instead, teachers can praise the student for their efforts and help them understand the differences.

Reproduction

A student’s ability to reproduce the vocal model will depend on many variables. First, students must feel they can reproduce the sound. Some students might be able to repeat the sound in the moment but find it difficult the following day. It will take time to develop a repeatable skill, so conductor-teachers must establish time throughout the rehearsal to help each student grow. Strategies can include creating group activities that incorporate critical thinking, discussion, and the creation of these target goals in every rehearsal.

Students must also have ample time to practice and explore a specific goal, but they don’t need to perform aloud. Students can practice a goal silently or mentally before performing the goal aloud. This is known as feedforward practice (Helding 2020, 130). Although these strategies take time away from learning more repertoire, they can also develop transferable skills that will be useful in learning future repertoire. This was a common theme during the pandemic. Teachers began to focus less on repertoire and more on teaching foundational skills. Students can use these skills to build their self-efficacy for future musical independence.

Motivation

The final and sometimes most challenging part of the process is developing students' motivation. Conductor-teachers sometimes over-motivate students with positive praise, and other times students are motivated by the fear of grade-based quartet/octet hearings. Although these strategies are both effective, self-motivation can be the most impactful for learning. This means teachers must attend to students' personal needs, values, interests, and attitudes. It is also important to connect learning with their previous experiences while also getting them curious about new ideas and approaches. This can help encourage motivation. And an increase in motivation aids retention by increasing a student's processing time and moving the goal from working memory into long-term memory (Sousa 2017, 75-76). Whatever the motivational means, teachers must find ways to help students become interested in learning. Maybe, that can be achieved through repertoire selection, or perhaps it can be achieved by changing daily practice from teaching the music to teaching students vocal skills that will help them perform all styles of music more authentically. Simply breaking the process down through targeted attention can also help students feel motivated because they can see and hear the smaller goal. Once they have interest, they are more likely to put forth the effort needed to achieve the goal.

What's in your vocal model? A lot! Vocal models are a valuable part of student learning, and conductor-teachers should spend time practicing these models to make them more effective because not all models are helpful. A recent study by Sandy Hinkley (2021) investigated the effects of vibrato and pitch-varied vocal models on acoustic measurements of high school and undergraduate singers' vocal performance. Hinkley found that all singers had a propensity toward flat singing, vibrato rate tended to increase while singing after a vibrato vocal model, and pitch-varied models affected singers' accuracy. Hinkley suggested that "choral educators may need to acknowledge the possibility that singers regularly imitate vocal inaccuracies, imprecisions of which the conductor and/or singer may not be cognizant of in the moment. Consequently, consistent self-assessment through video analysis may be the key to increasing choral educators' awareness and improving modeling practices" (p. 15).

Much of my research and pedagogical interest is based on teaching the principles of voice production for a varied and sustainable approach to singing diverse and transferable voice qualities. Conductor-teachers can then choose voice qualities to help deliver the composer's intentions both musically and textually. To do this, teachers should first research current trends and ideals in voice quality, then explore the possibilities within *our voices*. As our vocal models improve, so too will our effectiveness and efficiency in teaching voice qualities and skills to our students. For further reading on teaching vocal technique skills in the group ensemble setting, visit www.brianwinnie.com.

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The Art and Importance of Listening for Vocal Jazz Learning

Jim McCullough

Vocal Jazz

In the past I know that I have shared and referenced the importance of listening in vocal jazz education. Here, I go more in depth with thoughts and techniques for active and effective listening.

Setting the Stage. Guided listening takes a little preparation. I start every rehearsal with an exemplary recoding. Pick carefully so that the recording reinforces good habits and healthy singing. Decide in advance what you would like the students to focus on. Let's begin with the singer's characteristics of style. Have they chosen to "swing" their interpretation of the tune or

utilize straight eighths (i.e. light rock or bossa nova) Is it slow, medium or fast tempo? Are there characteristics of form worth noting (AABA, 12 bar blues) etc.. Can you compare the rendition to a lead sheet to discuss differences in phrasing, word emphasis or rhythmic elements? Is there unique interaction between the singer and other musicians? For now, we will stay with the singer's role and leave the inst. portion for another time. (May I recommend some Tierney Sutton for interaction points?)

Guided Discussion. I find it best to play recordings of songs that the group is singing and familiar with. Sometimes I'll play another group's recording of the same arrangement. With regard to the soloist version (non jazz choir), I have good luck with



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leading the discussion in areas such as rhythmic changes. Do the rhythms chosen by the singer help with the story telling aspect of the song? Did the singer make some radical changes i.e. a ballad becoming an uptempo swing or samba? Did their version work or does it seem contrived? Is the integrity of the song still intact? With regards to listening to another interpretation of the same arrangement By a different jazz choir, I tread carefully and encourage kids to point out differences from their own interpretation to the other choir's. We stay away from judgement calls and focus on artistic differences of opinion.

"Jazz is better caught than taught." John Maowad (CWU, WA state deceased). More than most musical arts, jazz is an aural tradition. It needs to be felt, communicated and received by ear and beyond the written page. It falls to us as VJ educators to ensure that this remains the case. We must maintain the "feel" and purpose behind the tune and maintain the integrity.

End Game. Hopefully these listening sessions will open up our student's minds and voices and get them "inside" the music/ deeper than the surface of just singing notes, rhythms pretty chords. Bon Chance.

A return to singing in worship: Navigating the pastoral needs of our singers during a pandemic

Dr. Christopher Windle Music in Worship

We all know that COVID-19 has been a challenge for church music programs. The loss of not only choral ensembles, but congregational music making has been challenging for all of us – for every program, for every denomination. What's more, caring for the pastoral needs of our congregations and choristers has been incredibly challenging.

Now, vaccines have provided hope and a way forward – we are beginning to return to singing in our churches. But, how do we return? Other articles and resources have (and continue to) provide a wealth of information on mitigation strategies and best practices to keep the choir safe. Yet, how do we care for those people who are in our ensembles, and how can we navigate the needs of these individuals as we return?

There are as many answers to this as there are church musicians. Some churches have continued to find ways to sing in person through the pandemic, some have gone fully virtual, and many have found ways to 'pivot' in order to continue providing some sort of music – some sort of connection – throughout this last year and a half.

As we return, a robust conversation is needed around the musical and pastoral needs of our choir members and the congregations whom we serve. Many of our singers will feel relieved, while others may feel anxious. Some are ready to sing without masks, and some probably still aren't ready to come to church at all.

I asked several music directors and choral conductors from churches in Illinois to respond to a series of questions via email about their experiences in this pandemic, the ways they're choosing to return to singing, and how they're caring

for themselves. These contributing musicians are:

- **Stephen Buzard**, Director of Music at St. James Cathedral (Episcopal), Chicago, IL
- **Paul French**, Music Director at Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Chicago, IL
- **Jeff Hunt**, Director of Music at Baker Memorial United Methodist Church, St. Charles, IL
- **Dr. Robert McConnell**, Music Director & Organist at St. John's Lutheran Church, Wilmette, IL
- **Dr. John W. W. Sherer**, Organist and Director of Music at Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago, IL

From these responses emerged common themes, common concerns, and common hopes. Indeed, from their responses, a conversation emerged about how we all might think about how to care for the pastoral needs of our singers in the newest phase of this pandemic.

I hope that the resulting responses will be encouraging and illuminating; and serve to begin an even larger conversation about how we can best minister to those we serve through music. We are all in this together.

What did your program look like prior to the pandemic?

Jeff Hunt (JH): Prior to the pandemic we averaged around 160 parishioners over 2 services. We are currently offering 1 in person service and an online service. Our ensemble musical offerings before the pandemic were an Adult choir, Men's ensemble, Women's ensemble, Youth Choir, Adult Bell Choir, Youth Bell Choir and a Brass ensemble.

Robert McConnell (RM): Prior to the pandemic, our program consisted of an adult choir of four to six volunteers and four paid section leaders that sang every Sunday. We also had a praise band (keys, bass, guitar, percussion and vocals) and a handbell choir of seven, both of which played seasonally.

John W. W. Sherer (JWS): Prior to covid our church had six adult choirs; five instrumental ensembles; four children's choirs; we presented 70-80 concerts each year; had a partnership with the Music Institute of Chicago to offer lessons to 75-100 people each week.

Stephen Buzard (SB): The Cathedral Choir comprises 32 members - 16 paid and 16 volunteer singers. The Cathedral Choristers comprise about 15 boys and girls in grades 3-8. The Junior Choristers are about 7 boys and girls between K and 2.

What did your church do over the course of the last year and a half regarding music in worship (particularly with your ensembles)?

Paul French (PF): The ensembles were all on the shelf from mid-March 2020. During the past year we engaged a vocal quartet (professional) who sang in masks from the back wall of the

choir loft - far removed from the assembly. It wasn't until the last liturgies of the season (in June) that the singers took it upon themselves to speak to me about the possibility of removing their masks - which I allowed.

JH: Over the past year and a half we have been offering online music and as of July of this year, we are offering small ensembles in our in person worship service. For around 3 months in the fall/winter of 2020, we did record small groups of 8 singers in masks and distanced in a ventilated room of the church. We stopped doing that as infections increased and we just had soloists providing music. Over the summer, we had a program called "Ring and Sing". It was a four session experience designed to bring people back and invite new people to our music program. We offered a picnic before the rehearsals. It was very successful and seen as a way ... to encourage and welcome our musicians. Our last session was a reading of Faure's Requiem.

JWS: We had begun live streaming our morning worship services each week in December 2019 so when the pandemic hit we could fortunately go that route exclusively. Although after only one Sunday, March 15, in our church with no congregation we decided to pre-record the music from our living room and the sermon from our Pastor Shannon Kershner's living room and continued doing this from March 22 until June when Chicago allowed small gatherings of people again. In June, 2020 we live streamed the service from the sanctuary with only five or so worship leaders. At that time, we began having a soloist and a virtual choir anthem sung by four singers each Sunday. This continued for a year until June 20, 2021 when we welcomed our congregation back, although not allowing them to sing. We continue with four singers. During the pandemic we created a new online service which is entirely pre-recorded with our jazz ensemble playing. The service is 15 minutes long and aired Wednesday evenings. Throughout the entire pandemic we continued our Friday noontime concerts; three months were live streamed from our living room with me mostly playing piano. In June 2020 we moved the concerts back to the sanctuary for live stream only and have regular audience members in Japan, England, and a military base in Qatar.

SB: The Cathedral Choir recorded 4 virtual choir audio projects each week for use in services. For hymns and accompanied anthems, we played the organ live along to the pre-recorded virtual choir to create as realistic a simulation for worshippers as possible. Starting after Easter 2021, we had a live soloist, and in May a live quartet. We are now incorporating a choir of twelve and have reintroduced congregational singing. The Choristers met the music staff for individual voice lessons over Zoom. They continued to gather in the Cathedral during their normal Wednesday rehearsal time to work on music theory and other skills without singing. Beginning in May, we rehearsed in the garden behind the Cathedral and held the one-on-one voice lessons in person.

RM: During the pandemic, our church opted to worship together via Zoom and this suited our smaller congregation very well by giving our people the ability to interact with one another. For music, my wife and I logged into Zoom from the church sanctuary. I would play the organ and piano, and she would cantor. The congregation sang along at home to all the hymns by remaining on mute. I kept the ensembles engaged by creating numerous virtual choir/band projects. This was time consuming and required a very great deal of technical coaching, but it was very helpful in maintaining esprit de corps during the shutdowns. The one drawback to this arrangement was that the virtual videos needed to be played through Zoom by a person sharing their screen, which inevitably degraded the video quality.

The church resumed in-person worship in early June. The first Sunday back, I hired a quartet of singers as a choir and they sang masked. We required the congregation to be masked, but we allowed congregational singing on all the hymns.

What are you planning to do this fall? What guidance/requirements are you or your church leadership instituting around singing (particularly for your ensemble)?

JH: This fall, we intend to return to our full slate of musical offerings however in 1 service. Our pastoral leadership team has decided to have our 1 service 50 minutes in length. This means that our adult choir will not sing every Sunday to make room for all the other musical offerings we hope to offer. I'm not sure what impact that will have on our music ministry but perhaps a slower return may be beneficial? Our intention was to allow all singers that are fully vaccinated to sing without masks but as the Delta variant has emerged, we are back to singing with masks for the near future.

RM: Things are in a state of flux now. A month ago, it was my plan to begin regular performances with our choir's volunteers in September. However, in light of the spread of the Delta variant, the local ELCA synod issued new guidelines on music which have effectively discontinued both congregational and choral singing. We are continuing with in-person worship but with all hymns provided by a masked cantor while the congregation remains seated. Guidance has not been provided on the metrics that would allow for a return to congregational and choral singing, so we're in a holding pattern for the foreseeable future.

SB: The Cathedral Choir is required to be vaccinated and to receive any recommended booster shots. We have decided to resume as normal a program year as possible. During periods of higher viral transmission, we will avoid rehearsing in the close-quarters of the choir room and instead rehearse with distance in the Cathedral. We will also wear masks while singing when cases exceed 100/100k/week in Cook County as an extra precaution. However, most of our singers prefer to sing unmasked, considering the very small risk of breakthrough infections. The choristers will begin the year in the garden, shifting to indoor rehearsals when they can be vaccinated. The

older choristers, who have been vaccinated, will resume vocal leadership of our 9am service.

JWS: This fall we are moving to have eight singers for the choir, still masked and socially distanced. The congregation will not be able to sing for the foreseeable future. ... We plan to still have the same number of ensembles after the pandemic and are planning to add a new one as soon as the pandemic is over, a gospel choir.

PF: Perhaps most pressing for me, personally, is the nagging question *who* will return to our ensembles. It occurs to me that in this period of forced hiatus, our singers, both youth and adults, have moved in many and varied directions these past months, picking up new hobbies and ways to spend their free time, and we simply cannot presume that they will all return.

This August we will be having a week-long Choir Camp for our student choristers from grades 1-8, so as to jump start the new season. The Camp will be a fully masked affair.

The High School/Collegiate Schola, Morning Choir and Contemporary Choirs begin singing [the weekend of August 14 and 15], also as a jump-start to the new season, which begins in September. All choral events will be masked (and distanced when possible).

I have taken it upon myself to re-recruit every adult and youth (and their parents), reconnecting on an individual basis, holding lots of individual conversations/emails, so as to share the latest scientific data, to speak about our Covid/Delta protocols, and to determine levels of comfort for each choir member. Ultimately the conversation needs to center around *an invitation* to return, again, reminding each individual singer of their importance to the ensemble.

How are you navigating different levels of comfort from your singers? What modifications - if any - are you making?

PF: Safety and comfort with the precautions are of the utmost concern. About 1/3 of our choir members are not yet ready to return. If the pandemic environment allows, we will be doing a larger push to invite returning members to re-join in Advent/Christmas. In the meantime, we are rehearsing in the largest spaces possible, in masks, limiting rehearsal period, ventilating spaces, etc.

SB: Most of our singers are eager to resume a normal singing life and understand the risks that may entail. All singers may wear a mask if they choose. We have held "summer sings" every few weeks to give everyone the chance to feel comfortable singing together again.

JWS: No singers are required to sing and there is a sign up sheet for each week. They sing masked and socially distant.

JH: Offering a plan with our musicians including the music we will experience is something I thought was more important than ever to do, so I decided this year, to put together and

share with our musicians a full year schedule of how and when they will participate. This was greeted warmly and I think provided something they could count on and look forward to.

RM: The volunteer members of my choir have been very eager to return to singing together without masks as soon as possible. My paid section leaders are generally more leery about singing unmasked and I imagine that any return to choral singing will likely come with a masking requirement for the first few months.

How are you balancing music and pastoral concerns as you begin this season?

JWS: I am always balancing pastoral concerns and music so now is no different, it's just more intense. The church has provided financial and counseling assistance to choir members in need. I have tried via zoom to keep choir members socially connected throughout the pandemic. Many just need to talk.

PF: Our youth choirs have, perhaps, taken the biggest hit. Over the near year and a half of dormancy, our older, most experienced singers have graduated out of their ensembles, and have left our choirs a bit in tatters, with some Lent and Paschal-time repertoire not being sung for two years, and a large chunk of the rest of the repertoire for a single year. There has not been the careful building of pedagogy and technique, and the invaluable modeling from the older, more experienced voices to the younger singers. No new music has been learned. Many of our traditional choral events have gone silent, be they lessons and carols, or end of year concerts, or the myriad sung liturgies in seasons throughout the liturgical year. Our 6th graders in March of 2020, are now entering as our 8th graders in the Fall of 2021 and will carry the weight of responsibility for that modeling as the year progresses. These are the choristers who have not sung for a year and a half, nor thought about posture or tall vowels, or deep breathing, or any of the repertoire. That's a lot to put on the shoulders of those choristers. We must carefully, and without presumption, build back our programs, both in terms of the reclaiming of those singers who were in our choirs, of inviting those who have graduated out of their choirs to join the 'next' ensemble, of the recruitment of new choristers of all ages, being aware of our choristers vocal changes that may have occurred over the past months, of jump-starting the learning of new and familiar repertoire, and simply of reinvigorating our children and youth choral programs (and their parents) and reclaiming all those glorious traditions. Ultimately, safety must trump all else, both morally and practically.

SB: I think people take great comfort in us carrying on offering the best music we possibly can. I hope the choral programs here can demonstrate our faith by being bold and courageous while still taking proper precautions.

RM: My choristers and I have been very discouraged by the current [synod] guidelines. Nonetheless, It's very important to me to maintain a sense of group cohesion and community while this state of flux persists, so I am planning a series of social get-togethers for the music ministry over the next few months. I

also routinely check in one-on-one with members of the music ministry to get a read on their mental health.

JH: Navigating different levels of comfort and pastoral care are my biggest challenges. I think giving each other and ourselves permission to deal with this tragedy as best we can is important. Some are still grieving and some are done and ready to move on. I'm needing to remind myself that the pandemic has impacted all of us differently. Our family lost a loved one to Covid 19. Expectations, musically and otherwise will be different for a while for our congregation and myself. Love and patience will hopefully guide all that is before me and us.

Do you have any thoughts broadly on how we can best support our singers as we continue to navigate the pandemic?

RM: The best way to support our singers is to give them opportunities to sing. A return to the virtual space is not likely to be politically feasible, so if these current [synod] guidelines continue I am going to have to find creative ways of giving my choristers and congregation an opportunity to use their gifts. One idea I've had is hosting outdoor hymn sings and choir rehearsals.

PF: Of real concern for we directors of choirs is what sort of vocal shape will our children, teens and adults be in upon their return to the choral fold. This pandemic has silenced our singers, and their dormant vocal instruments will need a period of reawakening and revitalizing to get back into shape. Our choristers shouldn't expect their voices to move as fluidly, nor their breath to be as robust, nor their range as full without a similar period of preparation. When considering the effect this extended period of vocal dormancy has had on our younger singers, and all the physical and physiological changes that have taken place in their bodies over the year and a half, I have determined that perhaps the best thing I can do as their choir directors is get to know them and their continually developing instruments. In the 2-3 weeks prior to the start of the choir season I am planning a scheduled "vocal assessment" for each youth and teen choir member, learn about their interests and potential schedule conflicts, and discover how their voices have changed over the many months, and ensure that I know if my strongest boy treble from March of 2019 is now an unconfident bass, trying to control a very unpredictable instrument. Our adult singers have been silent for months, as well, and will need several weeks of (gentle) vocalization to put their instruments back in order. In the 4-6 weeks leading up to [the] first September rehearsal, I will be encouraging the building of good vocal habits. I'll invite our adults to reclaim their singer identities and to remember the simple joy that is derived from singing. I'll challenge them to make time to sing a bit each day, beginning with five minutes and progressing to fifteen minutes or more every day, so as to move the vocal apparatus and the body, and help connect breath to sound, return vocal flexibility and broaden the singing range. I'll share some on-line resources to assist my singers with vocal warm-ups, breathing exercises, posture reminders, music theory tutorials, etc., all of which can aid in this vocal renewal process.

JWS: If you have professional singers, as we are fortunate to have, continue paying them and providing meaningful work for them to do. Musicians need to make music for their spirits to thrive and to pay their bills. Look for any opportunity to allow people to gather safely and to be creative. I heard of one church that turned their choir into a handbell ensemble during the pandemic just so the people could gather safely and still make music together.

SB: Our singers need to sing. After 18 months, it's time to get back to work. Not only do our paid singers need the work, but everyone in the choir needs this outlet for their personal, social, and spiritual fulfillment. Our choral programs may be gone for good if we do not resume at this phase of reopening. We know the vaccines are highly effective and that a rare breakthrough infection will result in a cold or mild flu. The risk assessment may be different for the elderly, or for those who care for vulnerable people, but for most of our singers, who are young adults, the risk is worth it. The vaccine is what we were waiting for, and I believe if we delay singing now, we will not reach any benchmark by which to resume it again. It seems that covid is here to stay; will singing be here to stay too?

What are you planning to do to care for yourself this year?

JH: As for myself, I have enjoyed revisiting my love of playing classical guitar and trying to connect deeply with those I cherish.

JWS: I exercise regularly, do yoga, tai chi and take long walks almost every day which helps all the time, even during a pandemic.

RM: This has been the most challenging of all. I will be frank, my mindset is more focused on endurance than self-care at the moment.

SB: Honestly, resuming my *actual* job of directing live music will be the best pastoral care. I find the work fulfilling and energizing and look forward to making music to the glory of God this season.

PF: Get back to work!

Child-like Choices, Chances, Changes, and Challenges

Lynda Marshall Youth & Student Activities

Overhearing my nine-year-old and twelve-year-old nephews announce (both thinking I cannot hear them), "Aunt Lynda is on the struggle bus!" followed with giggles and snickers as I try to accomplish a task they are witnessing makes me laugh every time. That was the first thought that popped into my head as I write this article. I AM on the struggle bus. I THINK a lot of you reading this may also be on the struggle bus. I KNOW children, teenagers, and adults we will share music with this year are taking a ride on the struggle bus, too.

Every time I write, I contemplate what I could say that could help someone in some way. I want to begin with five brief excerpts from a book:

- Music teachers can make a difference. Many students report that their sole reason for staying in school (and out of trouble) was the motivation and inspiration derived from participation in the arts. Students often cite their relationship with their arts teacher as the one thing that carried them through the rough times.¹
- Teacher consistency is essential. Teachers who are perceived as caring, fair, consistent, and nonjudgmental attract the respect and loyalty of their students. For some children, the teacher is the only stable and dependable adult in their lives.²
- High expectations must be maintained. Teachers who demand excellence while maintaining a nurturing and supportive environment tend to bring out the best in students. It is important to maintain high standards and insist that each child do his or her best. To demand less gives the

child clear signals that he or she is incapable of achieving at the same level as other children.³

- In an overcrowded curriculum for children who in addition to learning the 'basics' must learn to survive in a dangerous world, what will study of the arts contribute to their intellectual, emotional, and physical development and well-being? What skills can music and the arts offer these children that will contribute to their success and survival? The obvious answer is that the arts can offer what all children, not just the disadvantaged, need: the ability to deal with the ambiguity of today's world, the capacity to understand their past through their cultural heritage, and the power to transform their future and make it better.⁴
- Writers today are even more worried about how students who are at such great risk can develop the ability to organize new information and make sense of it, to achieve some social awareness and a sense of right and wrong, to trust others, and to perceive school as a safe place.⁵

Do any of those excerpts sound familiar to you? Do you agree or disagree with the points made in the statements? As I was cleaning my office about three weeks ago, I came across *Music and Students at Risk: Creative Solutions for a National Dilemma*, published by the Music Educators National Conference in 1997. I acquired this book my senior year of college while completing my music methods courses at Illinois State University. Those excerpts were published before Smartphones, email as an acceptable way to communicate professionally, social media platforms, and a worldwide pandemic. Why I had hung onto this old, dusty book for so long, I cannot pinpoint; however, when I saw the title and opened to the preface, I realized that very little has changed in almost twenty-five years. We now, more than ever, need to continue to find creative solutions for

a national dilemma. Let me re-phrase that. WE now, more than ever, NEED to work TOGETHER to SHARE innovative solutions for a national and worldwide dilemma. What is the dilemma? In my opinion, mostly the same as it was twenty-five years ago (content in the excerpts above is the same subject matter found in recent articles). However, now we are living through a global pandemic that has shaken musicians, ensembles, teachers, and conductors to their cores.

How can we even begin to find the solutions? Truthful and straightforward answer: I do not know. I have some ideas, though! Let us ride the struggle bus together and help each other giggle and snicker through it all, just like a child! A quick Google search of “child-like characteristics” reminded me that I need to step back sometimes and reframe my thoughts to serve those around me better. The first webpage I opened in

my Google search shared seven “child-like characteristics:” curiosity, excitement, faith, trust, wonder, short memory, and persistence. We can choose to take a chance, rise above challenges, and create change so our love of music can take root, grow, and bloom no matter what age we are or what age we are sharing music. Maybe you think this sounds too simple for a complex issue. I do believe that the smallest seed can take root as long as we care about it. Starting small is better than not starting at all. I extend the “child-like challenge” to you for thinking and reflecting on those seven characteristics. I hope you will feel reinvigorated to serve your peers, students, and community members with new hope and love for each other in the musical experiences you will share during this academic year.

¹ Jack A Taylor, Nancy H. Barry, and Kimberly C. Walls, *Music and Students at Risk: Creative Solutions for a National Dilemma* (Reston, VA: Music Educators National Conference, 1997), 4.

² Ibid., 79

³ Ibid., 79

⁴ Ibid., 52

⁵ Ibid., 51

AMERICAN CHORAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION





HEADLINERS



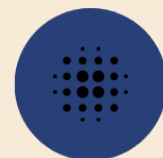
David Brunner



Diana Saez

IL-ACDA FALL CONFERENCE 2021

"MANY VOICES"



FRIDAY

abbreviated schedule

Opening Plenary

David Brunner

10:00 - 10:45 am

Gannon Hall

Reading/Interest Sessions

Rob Sinclair.....Teaching for Transfer: Making Every Moment Count (C319)

Panel Discussion (Eric Esparza).....Q&A with the Diversity Initiatives Committee (C307)

Reading Session.....Darius Polikaitus: World Music (C305)

11:15 - 12:00 pm

Concert Session #1

Kenwood Academy; University of Illinois

1:30 - 2:30 pm

Headliner Session

David Brunner.....Gannon Hall

3:00 - 3:45 pm

Reading/Interest Sessions

Panel Discussion (Eric Esparza).....Q&A with the Diversity Initiatives Committee (C307)

Reading Session.....Amy Branahl: Children's Choirs (C305)

4:15 - 5:00 pm

Decker Award: Eric Johnson - NIU

6:45 - 7:00 pm

Gannon Hall

Concert Session #2

Join Voices; Kababayan Collective; DePaul University

7:00 - 8:30 pm

Reception

9:00 pm

Holtschneider Main Hall

SATURDAY

Headliner Session

Diana Saez

9:00 - 9:45 am

Gannon Hall

Reading/Interest Sessions

Dr. Thomas Moors, Evangelos Himonides.....Shout at Cancer (C319)

Chris Windle.....Incorporating Streaming Technology into Choral Performance (C307)

Reading Session.....Ron Korbitz: MS and Junior High (C305)

10:15 - 11:00 am

Concert Session #3

Lincoln Land Community; Naperville Men's Choir

11:15 - 12:15 pm

Concert Session #4

Children's Honor Choir; Augustana Choir; Windy City Performing Arts

2:00 - 3:30 pm